



Dedicated to preserving the Athabascan way of life.

CULTURAL HERITAGE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE

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Gail Pass
Grants Officer
First Alaskan's Institute

9-23-04

Dear Gail,

Just a note to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all your help and flexibility! We are excited about all the prospects for next year and have really learned a lot about Cultural Preservation this year. Most of my accomplishments involve Old Minto, and I am happy to say I have organized a new board of directors and held two new board meetings. I have completed a 38 page guide entitled Old Minto Culture Camp Guide and Activity Book. It has been published by Alaska Native Knowledge Network, and will soon be attached to our website also. We will send you a hard copy as we receive them.

We are very grateful to partner with first Alaskan's and hope we can do so in the future.



Stephanie Little Wolf

The First Alaskans Institute
Narrative Report

From The Cultural Heritage and Education Institute

PROJECT INFORMATION

Summary

Our original expected outcome of this project was the finishing and insulating of the kitchen and dining hall, which were to be moved together and insulated, windows installed and flooring insulated and finished. We planned to order the materials from ok lumber and ship them by barge from Nenana to Old Minto. We had a crew ready and had worked out all other logistical details.

Principal accomplishments

The kitchen has been moved and attached to the dining hall; however, because of the fires and heavy smoke all summer, we were unable to finish the rest of the project by the projects deadline.

Difficulties encountered

Executive Director Robert Charlie made the decision after spring breakup to wait until after we had held our traditional culture camps which are our main source of revenue for our organization. Unfortunately, after our camps had taken place, we had a number of raging fires in Alaska, as you may know, over 6 million acres of forest lands burned and air quality was hazardous to breathe in Fairbanks and in Old Minto especially, for the remainder of the summer. Consequently it was impossible to retain our crew for the construction phase of the project. We could just could not compete with the money some of our crew was receiving fighting fires nor were they available locally after the forest fires started. The rest of our crew was nervous about working under hazardous conditions as the smoke was very heavy in Old Minto.

Refinements/unexpected outcomes

Since we could not complete the project as originally detailed, we received permission from First Alaskans institute to put our remaining grant monies into the purchase of equipment for Old Minto instead. We have received a grant from The USDA, Department of Rural Development of \$38,000 with our matching amount to be \$12,500. Our remaining funds from First Alaskans will almost cover that amount! This was unexpected and very greatly appreciated. The two new boats will greatly enhance our capacity building and our ability to hold culture camps. Please see attached narrative about why having our own boats is so crucial to our organization.

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Advice/strengths/limitations

We would definitely advise organizations to trouble shoot ahead of time, try to have a plan in case unexpected events occur, and then try to brainstorm as to what events could interfere with the project and then how to cope with each one. I would have preferred to do the project first thing before our Culture Camps, so that we could be sure to have it done by the deadline in case of delays, always count on delays.

Post grant plans

With the purchase of the two boats, we can haul our own supplies down next year and hopefully finish the project. We will not need to hire a barge and we will not have the need to hire commercial passenger boats to take us from Nenana to Old Minto. We should be able to thus increase our capacity to involve our own people in the projects, and build on accomplishing great sustainability for our organization and its culture preserving projects. Once we have completed the winterization, we will be able to hold culture camps and culture tourism year round.

Organizational Information

Future changes

We are looking at some major changes down the road. A restructuring of the organization will be attempted. The Rasmuson foundation has informed us that they will be offering assistance to Alaska's Native non Profit organizations just for this purpose. We are very excited about this. Also, Robert Charlie is looking forward to retiring at some point and the assistance will help train a new Athabascan Executive director. Any advice or help from First Alaskans in this regard is very appreciated.

ATTACHMENTS

Please find the narrative to the USDA about our boats. They have approved this project.

A) Need for the Facility (Boats)

The need for facility spans three categories: financial sustainability of the Culture Camps and the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute, the health and safety of the staff (which includes elders) and participants, and the independence of reliance upon limited and fixed commercial operator schedules.

Financial sustainability

Each SeaArk Boat can seat between 16 to 22 passengers. Per person, a round trip from Nenana to Old Minto can cost approximately \$100.00, and total cost for staff, participants and supplies can range from \$12,000 to \$15,000 per summer depending on how many camps are scheduled. (See supporting documents for actual contracts). Saving on this cost would allow more Heritage Camps by saving on expenditures as well as increasing sustainability for the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute, which relies almost exclusively on camp generated funds to operate year round. With the Additional boats, CHEI will be able to invest up to \$15,000 back into the organization, enabling us to operate more efficiently and reach many more people.

Health and Safety

It is important for The Cultural Heritage and Education Institute to insure the security of all those involved in the various Heritage Camps. Most notably is the health and welfare of Elders who may need to be evacuated for a number of health reasons. Currently, the participants are delivered by commercial boat operators at CHEI's expense, leaving only one supply boat that CHEI currently owns to evacuate anyone remaining that must seek medical help, those still at the Camp may be jeopardized should they need to leave as well should that boat be detained. The new boats additionally provide the safety feature of being covered with awnings and windows and therefore reducing the effects of sudden adverse weather conditions, as well as keeping passengers safely inside the boats while on route.

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Independence of Commercial Boat Schedules

It is often difficult to plan and execute all the logistics of a Heritage Camp. There are times when everything falls into place and then there are times when one detail is not in sync with the rest of the operation. This can cost time and money. Boat contractors must operate on a fixed schedule and are not available at other times. Not having to schedule camps around or rely upon any commercial operators would free up valuable time and resources for the Cultural Heritage and Education Institute. As our Elders get up in years, they tire more easily and it may be necessary to include them for shorter and shorter periods at the camps. Our own boats give us the flexibility to meet the needs of our aging Elders at a time when they need us to be flexible in order to continue serving the camps.

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